

## **Evidence-Based Breastfeeding Information for Health Professionals Who Counsel New Moms**

This information is based on the most current breastfeeding updates and recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Texas WIC trains all WIC breastfeeding counselors at routine in-service training to follow these recommendations.

New moms often complain that the information they receive from various health professionals is inconsistent and, therefore, confusing. The intent of this hand out is to assist health professionals in offering current, accurate and consistent information on common breastfeeding topics when they counsel women and their families about breastfeeding.

To review the AAP Policy Statement, Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk go to <http://www.aap.org/policy/re9729.html>.

For free breastfeeding brochures and posters for your health facility, go to <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/wichd/bf/bfpubs.htm>

**Human milk is the healthiest food for human babies.** Breastmilk is the only infant food that contains antibodies to protect a baby from disease. This is an important consideration for parents when deciding how to feed their baby. The issue is one of health, not simply a lifestyle choice. Breastfeeding offers health benefits to both the mother and her baby which formula cannot. Breastmilk is easy for a baby to digest and helps his gut to develop. Breastfeeding helps a baby's brain to grow, may improve vision, and helps form healthy teeth and jaws. Not only is breastmilk the healthiest food for an infant, it will continue to provide benefits throughout his life. While other baby foods are stagnant, and at some point expire, breastmilk is always fresh, natural, and a dynamic substance that changes to meet a baby's nutritional needs.

**Nursing a baby within 30 minutes of birth is ideal.** Studies show that breastfeeding within one hour of birth, ideally within the first 30 minutes of birth, enhances the breastfeeding process and milk production. This also begins the bonding process between mother and child.

**Newborns should be nursed every 1½ to 2 hours around the clock.** Breastmilk is the easiest food for a baby to digest. Because breastmilk is digested easily, and because a newborn's tummy is about the size of his fist, a breastfed newborn needs small, frequent feedings. Fathers and grandparents of the baby may be more supportive if

they understand this. If a newborn does not wake up, the mother should wake him to nurse. This will also help prevent engorgement.

**Colostrum may not change to mature milk for 3 to 5 days.** A newborn will thrive on his mother's colostrum until her mature milk comes in. Colostrum is rich in antibodies to help protect her baby against infection and disease. The more frequently a mother nurses, the faster her milk will come in.

**A baby should be fed when demonstrating early hunger cues.** Early hunger cues include sucking on his fist, making smacking noises, licking his lips, or turning his head in search of his mother's breast. Crying is a late hunger cue and means the baby has been hungry for a while. Waiting for her baby to cry before feeding him will make it more difficult to get her baby latched on to the breast.

**Parents can tell if their baby is getting enough to eat by counting the number of wet and soiled diapers he produces.**

	Number of Wet Diapers	Number of Soiled Diapers
<b>Day 1</b>	<b>1-2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Day 3</b>	<b>3-4</b>	<b>At least 3</b>
<b>Day 4</b>	<b>4-5</b>	<b>At least 3</b>
<b>Day 5</b>	<b>4-5</b>	<b>At least 3</b>
<b>Day 6-45</b>	<b>At least 6</b>	<b>At least 3 (some breastfed babies will dirty every diaper.)</b>
<b>After 6 weeks of age, baby will have fewer dirty diapers.</b>		

**A newborn should be given only breastmilk the first few weeks.** When mother and baby are establishing the mother's breastmilk supply during the first weeks, giving supplements of water, juice, or formula, will interfere with breastmilk production. The more a mother nurses, the more milk she will produce. The less she nurses, and the more she supplements, the less milk she will produce. The AAP advises mothers to give their baby nothing but breastmilk for about the first 6 months of life. Fathers and grandparents of the baby may be more supportive if they understand this.

**Avoid pacifiers the first few weeks.** Often parents will use a pacifier when their baby cries, instead of putting the baby to the breast. Giving a pacifier may satisfy the baby temporarily, but the baby needs to nurse. Feeding a baby at the first signs of hunger will help with weight gain and establishing the mother's milk supply. The AAP says

*supplements and pacifiers should be avoided whenever possible and, if used at all, only after breastfeeding is well established.*

**A mother should nurse her baby on one breast until the baby ends the feeding.** The foremilk, or milk a baby gets the first 5 minutes or longer, is high in liquids to satisfy his thirst, while the hind milk he gets after the first 5 or 10 minutes at the breast is rich in fats to satisfy his hunger cues. When a baby ends a feeding by falling asleep or “falling off the breast,” encourage the mother to burp him and offer her other breast. The baby may nurse again right away or may take the other breast in a few minutes or a few hours.

**Breastfeeding may help prevent pregnancy during the first 6 months postpartum.** If all of the following are in place, breastfeeding is 98% effective in preventing pregnancy. Of course, there is still a 2% chance of pregnancy.

- 1) Baby is less than six months old and mother is breastfeeding exclusively, never giving water, juice, formula, or solid foods.
- 2) Mother’s menstrual period has not returned past 8 weeks after her baby was born. She may have experienced some bleeding right after her baby was born, but after the 8<sup>th</sup> week, not even a little bleeding.
- 3) Mother breastfeeds at least every four hours around the clock (one six-hour sleep period at night is o.k.).

If any of the above changes, another form of birth control should be used.

**If a woman is breastfeeding one baby, and becomes pregnant with another child, she does not have to wean her older baby.** The milk her breasts produce for her newborn will be different and taste different, so her older baby may not like the taste and may want to wean. But many mothers nurse a newborn and a toddler simultaneously. Breastmilk changes to meet the needs of the newborn first, but the toddler will continue to receive nutritional benefits from her milk.

**A breastfeeding mother does not have to wean her baby from the breast at one year of age, as she would wean a baby from the bottle.** The AAP recommends breastfeeding for at least one full year *or longer*. It is recommended that formula fed babies wean from the bottle at one year because of the risk of baby bottle tooth decay. Breastfeeding after one year gives a child extra nutritional benefits that will enhance his health for a lifetime. Breastmilk is not just a nutrition source, but it also promotes health in the infant by providing needed antibodies to fight germs that make infants and toddlers sick.

**The only food a baby needs for about the first six months of life is his or her mother's breastmilk.** Breastmilk provides all the nutrition and liquid a baby needs for about the first 6 months of life. Introducing solid foods before a baby is ready can cause allergies and other health problems. Before being introduced to solid foods, the baby should be able to:

- 1) sit up by himself or with little help
- 2) push food from the front to the back of his mouth
- 3) reach for food from the parents' plates

**Breastmilk helps protect babies from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)** and many other childhood illnesses and diseases. The longer a baby is breastfed, the more protection he receives.

**Mothers do not have to stop breastfeeding for any of the following reasons:**

- 1) **She is diabetic.** In fact, women who breastfeed improve their health and while they are nursing, some women may reduce their insulin needs.
- 2) **Her baby is jaundiced.** In fact, breastfeeding may help clear up the jaundice.
- 3) **She has a cold or flu.** Her milk is still the perfect food for her baby. Breastfeeding reduces the chance of her baby getting sick.
- 4) **She is on medication.** Most medications are compatible with breastfeeding. She should consult her doctor or pharmacist to be sure.
- 5) **Her baby is premature or has a special health condition.** Encourage her to pump her milk for her premature baby because it dramatically reduces the risk for common premature infant diseases. A baby with cleft lip or palate, Down Syndrome or other health conditions greatly benefit from their mother's milk.
- 6) **Her baby bites while nursing.** Advise the mother to simply remove her baby from the breast, say in a kind but firm voice, "No! Do not bite mommy!" Wait a few minutes, and offer the breast again. If he bites a second time, she should repeat the warning.
- 7) **She returns to work or school.** Many women manage breastfeeding and working. She can ask her WIC counselor for advice and helpful pamphlets.

**It is all right to give a baby both formula and breastmilk.** Some working moms have no opportunity to pump at work. They breastfeed when they are with their baby, but have the childcare provider feed him formula while mom is at work. Of course, exclusive breastfeeding is best for a baby, but any amount of breastmilk is better than none at all.